

SENATE RESOLUTION 713—CALLING ON ALL PARTIES TO THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE IN EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO TO IMPLEMENT AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE AND WORK WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE AND LASTING SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. DODD, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. ISAKSON, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BOND, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. NELSON of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 713

Whereas the Democratic Republic of Congo was devastated by civil wars lasting from 1996 to 1997 and 1998 to 2003, spawning some of the world's worst human rights violations and involving at least 6 neighboring countries;

Whereas, despite the signing of a peace agreement and subsequent withdrawal of foreign forces in 2003, eastern Congo has continued to suffer from high levels of poverty, insecurity, and absent or inadequate institutions, allowing armed and criminal groups to operate freely;

Whereas continuing abuses committed by the national military against civilians in Congo and apparent ties between the military and armed groups in the region have tainted attempts to restore the rule of law in the eastern region of the country;

Whereas, according to a study by the International Rescue Committee released in January 2008, the conflict and related humanitarian crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo have taken the lives of an estimated 5,400,000 people since 1998 and continue to cause as many as 45,000 deaths each month;

Whereas sexual violence and rape remain a pervasive tool of warfare used by all parties in eastern Congo to terrorize communities, affecting hundreds of thousands of women and girls and frequently resulting in traumatic fistula and other severe genital injuries;

Whereas the continued plunder and trade of eastern Congo's rich mineral base, notably cassiterite, coltan, and gold, by armed groups and members of the national military make war profitable and undermine peace efforts;

Whereas the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda signed the Nairobi Communiqué in November 2007, committing to work together to address the continued activity of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and other armed groups operating in their shared border region;

Whereas, on January 23, 2008, with the active support of the international community, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 22 armed groups in the eastern region signed the Goma accord, committing to an immediate ceasefire and buffer zones for troop disengagement and ultimately disarmament;

Whereas these agreements together provided the first working framework in years for peace and lasting stability in eastern Congo, but a continued culture of impunity and suspicion has impeded their implementation;

Whereas the United Nations reported more than 200 violations of these agreements be-

tween January and July of 2008, as well as 2,000 cases of rape and hundreds of people killed;

Whereas hate speech inciting ethnic violence by local and national leaders in Congo continued during this period, feeding the concerns and perceived insecurity of minority Tutsi communities;

Whereas, since August 28, 2008, fighting has resumed in North Kivu Province between the national military and the forces of General Laurent Nkunda, known as the National Congress for the Defense of the People, the latter of which has taken control of several government military bases and major towns around the city of Goma;

Whereas, according to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 250,000 people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of this renewed fighting in eastern Congo, often without access to shelter, water, food, and medicine, and adding to the over 1,000,000 people already displaced from North and South Kivu;

Whereas the United Nations Mission in Congo, known by its French acronym MONUC, has proven unable to protect civilians in light of this new offensive by General Nkunda's forces, causing resentment and protests by local communities;

Whereas allegations of troops from Angola, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe crossing into eastern Congo have strained existing regional tensions and increased fears of a wider war that could draw other countries from the region into the fighting, as happened in 1998;

Whereas the United Nations' Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Alan Doss, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have called for more troops and better capabilities for MONUC to stop the rebel offensive and protect civilians;

Whereas United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, on November 7, 2008, and convened a summit of regional leaders, including the heads of state of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, which led to a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire and the creation of humanitarian corridors; and

Whereas, in 2006, Congress passed the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 22, 2006 (Public Law 109-456), stating that it is the policy of the United States to work for peace and security throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo by supporting efforts to protect civilians, to disarm illegal armed groups, and to hold accountable individuals, entities, and countries working to destabilize the country: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the continuing violence, forcible recruitment of children as soldiers, and abuses against civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo;

(2) calls on the national military in Congo, the National Congress for the Defense of the People, and all armed groups operating in eastern Congo to cease hostilities, end all human rights abuses, and respect an immediate ceasefire based on the principles of the Goma agreement;

(3) calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to meet its obligations under the Lusaka Agreement of 1999, the Pretoria Agreement of 2002, and the Nairobi Communiqué of 2007 to take action to end the threat posed by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda;

(4) calls on the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda—

(A) to fully restore bilateral relations;

(B) to work together to mitigate escalating tensions in the region; and

(C) to break any ties that still exist between them and illegal armed groups in eastern Congo;

(5) calls on all governments in the Great Lakes region of Africa and those of the Southern African Development Community to support a peaceful resolution to the crisis while ensuring that the volatile situation does not spark a wider regional war;

(6) supports the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, his newly appointed United Nations Special Envoy, former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, and the international facilitation team to bring all parties to the negotiating table and establish a clear roadmap to implement the signed peace agreements;

(7) encourages the international community to take immediate measures to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Congo to protect civilians, specifically through increased troops and additional capabilities as requested by the Secretary-General;

(8) urges the President to sustain high-level diplomatic engagement together with the African Union, the European Union, and the United Nations to avert a wider regional war and revive a comprehensive peace process in eastern Congo;

(9) urges the United States and the international community to develop and support monitoring and verification mechanisms that can hold the parties in Congo accountable to the signed peace agreements, investigate alleged ceasefire violations, and ultimately challenge the continued culture of impunity in Congo; and

(10) urges the President and the international community to adopt measures to help the regional governments to identify and ultimately address the factors underlying the conflict in eastern Congo, especially weak governance and the exploitation of the region's lucrative minerals.

SENATE RESOLUTION 714—HONORING THE FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY WORKERS WHO COURAGEOUSLY FOUGHT FIRES IN CALIFORNIA IN 2008

Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 714

Whereas, in 2008, there have been more than 10,000 wildfires in California started by natural causes and human activity;

Whereas more than 1,440,000 acres of Federal, State, and local land in California burned in 2008;

Whereas, in June 2008, fires started by lightning strikes burned approximately 1,200,000 acres of Federal, State, and local land in California, making the June fires the largest single wildfire event in California's recorded history;

Whereas 41 counties across California were impacted by wildfires in 2008;

Whereas more than 1,400 homes were destroyed by fires in California in 2008;

Whereas State and local firefighters have been called to duty for increasingly long fire seasons, working on the front lines of these fires for weeks;

Whereas firefighters have risked their lives and endured great hardship to protect lives, property, and the environment in California;

Whereas many firefighters were injured and 14 firefighters tragically lost their lives in California in 2008;

Whereas 25,000 firefighters and emergency response personnel from California, 41 other

States, and other nations worked side-by-side to fight the wildfires;

Whereas members of the National Guard from California and other States provided essential support to the firefighting effort; and

Whereas the people of California and the United States recognize the steadfast dedication of the firefighters throughout the ongoing fire suppression and subsequent repair and rebuilding efforts: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commends the firefighters and emergency workers from California, 41 other States, and other nations for their courageous actions and sacrifices in fighting wildfires in California;

(2) supports the continued work of firefighters to protect National Forest System land, other public lands, and private property from further damage;

(3) praises the people of California for their great courage in the face of the fires; and

(4) extends heartfelt sympathy to the people who have lost loved ones, homes, and businesses in the wildfires.

SENATE RESOLUTION 715—EXTENDING THE AUTHORITY FOR THE SENATE NATIONAL SECURITY WORKING GROUP

Mr. REID submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 715

Resolved, That Senate Resolution 105 of the One Hundred First Congress, 1st session (agreed to on April 13, 1989), as amended by Senate Resolution 149 of the One Hundred Third Congress, 1st session (agreed to on October 5, 1993), as further amended by Senate Resolution 75 of the One Hundred Sixth Congress, 1st session (agreed to on March 25, 1999), as further amended by Senate Resolution 383 of the One Hundred Sixth Congress, 2d session (agreed to on October 27, 2000), as further amended by Senate Resolution 355 of the One Hundred Seventh Congress, 2d session (agreed to on November 13, 2002), as further amended by Senate Resolution 480 of the One Hundred Eighth Congress, 2d session (agreed to November 20, 2004), and as further amended by Senate Resolution 625 of the One Hundred Ninth Congress, 2d Session (agreed to on December 6, 2006), is further amended in section 4 by striking “2008” and inserting “2010”.

SENATE RESOLUTION 716—ACKNOWLEDGING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS OF THE YOUTH IMPACT PROGRAM

Mr. VITTER submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 716

Whereas many at-risk young men in the inner cities of the United States face a challenging and uncertain future;

Whereas the future success of at-risk young men can be greatly enhanced through sustained mentorship;

Whereas effective working partnerships between and within the public and private sectors can have a lasting and positive impact on the future of at-risk young men;

Whereas participation in organized sports has provided a creative and disciplined outlet and a path to a better life for many at-risk young men;

Whereas the Youth Impact Program combines the disciplines of football, mentoring, and academics in partnerships between local

National Football League franchises and universities to promote discipline, learning, and positive values;

Whereas the Youth Impact Program is a community-based program that has proven its value over the past 2 years in raising the outlook and aspirations of at-risk young men and has provided at-risk young men greater exposure to academics, core values, and life skills;

Whereas the Youth Impact Program provides year-round mentoring to its participants, a proven formula for building success;

Whereas the National Football League, the National Football League Players Association, the University of Southern California, and Tulane University have provided critical support to the Youth Impact Program;

Whereas the Youth Impact Program will be expanded to 3 additional cities in partnership with local National Football League franchises and universities;

Whereas the Youth Impact Program seeks to establish a presence in each city with a local National Football League franchise; and

Whereas under the vision and leadership of Mr. Riki Ellison, the founder of the Youth Impact Program, a 10-year veteran of the National Football League, a 3-time Super Bowl champion, and a University of Southern California alumnus, the Youth Impact Program has expanded from a regional program to a program with a growing national presence: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates Mr. Riki Ellison for his leadership and vision in founding the Youth Impact Program;

(2) recognizes the ongoing and significant contributions of the National Football League, the University of Southern California, and Tulane University to the Youth Impact Program; and

(3) encourages the expansion of the Youth Impact Program to inner cities across the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 717—DESIGNATING DECEMBER 13, 2008, AS “WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY”

Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Ms. SNOWE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 717

Whereas, more than 15 years ago, the Worcester Wreath Company, a for-profit business in Harrington, Maine, began a tradition of donating, transporting, and overseeing the placement of Maine balsam fir holiday wreaths on the graves of the fallen heroes at Arlington National Cemetery each December;

Whereas, since the Worcester Wreath Company began that tradition, through the hard work and generosity of the people involved in the Wreaths Across America project, hundreds of thousands of wreaths have been sent to more than 200 national cemeteries and veterans' memorials in all 50 states;

Whereas, in December 2008, the Patriot Guard Riders, a motorcycle and motor vehicle group dedicated to patriotic events, with more than 65,000 members nationally, will continue their tradition of escorting a tractor-trailer full of donated wreaths from Harrington, Maine to Arlington National Cemetery;

Whereas hundreds of volunteers participate in the escort each December;

Whereas Morrill Worcester, President of Worcester Wreath Company, has been nominated for, and received, several awards for

his humble service and exemplary patriotism to our Nation through this project; and

Whereas Wreaths Across America will continue this proud legacy on December 13, 2008: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates December 13, 2008, as “Wreaths Across America Day”;

(2) honors Wreaths Across America, the Worcester Wreath Company, Morrill Worcester, the Patriot Guard Riders, and all other companies and individuals involved in this worthy legacy; and

(3) recognizes the sacrifices our veterans and service members and their families have made, and continue to make, for our great Nation.

SENATE RESOLUTION 718—DESIGNATING NOVEMBER 30, 2008, AS “DRIVE SAFER SUNDAY”

Ms. CHAMBLISS (for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, and Mr. ISAKSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 718

Whereas motor vehicle travel is the primary means of transportation in the United States;

Whereas everyone driving on the roads and highways needs to do so more safely to reduce deaths and injuries resulting from motor vehicle accidents;

Whereas, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, wearing a seat belt saved 15,434 lives in 2004, 15,632 lives in 2005, and 15,383 lives in 2006;

Whereas Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters has urged all people of the United States to understand the life-saving importance of wearing a seat belt and has encouraged motorists to drive safely, not just during the holiday season, but each time they get behind the wheel; and

Whereas the Sunday after Thanksgiving is the busiest highway traffic day of the year: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) encourages—

(A) high schools, colleges, universities, administrators, teachers, primary schools, and secondary schools to launch campus-wide educational campaigns to urge students to drive safely;

(B) national trucking firms to alert truck drivers to focus on driving safely on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, and to publicize the importance of the day using Citizen's Band (“CB”) radios and truck stops across the United States;

(C) clergy to remind members to travel safely en route to religious services and gatherings;

(D) law enforcement personnel to remind drivers and passengers to drive safely on the Sunday after Thanksgiving; and

(E) all people of the United States to use the Sunday after Thanksgiving as an opportunity to educate themselves about highway safety; and

(2) designates November 30, 2008, as “Drive Safer Sunday”.